

Common Core State Standards March 2015

What are the Common Core State Standards?

Delaware is one of the more than 40 states and the District of Columbia to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Released in June 2010 by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, the standards are a shared set of **grade-level expectations for students in English language arts and mathematics**. The standards hold students to the same rigorous academic expectations of their peers in other states and in top-performing countries.

Over the last three years, teachers have been gradually incorporating Common Core into their teaching, with full implementation in all Delaware schools by the 2014-15 school year. There are three primary phases contributing to full implementation, including:

- **Training and communications** to assure all educators have a full understanding of the standards,
- Development of the **curriculum** to support these standards, and
- An **assessment (Smarter Balanced)** that is aligned to and measures student understanding of the standards.

Each of these phases are important in achieving successful implementation.

What do students need to know and be able to do?

Common Core clearly articulates **what** students are expected to learn in English language arts and mathematics at each grade level. The standards set grade-specific goals; however, they do **not** define how the standards should be taught or what materials should be used to teach them.

For example, one second grade English language arts standard is:

"Identify the main topic of a multi-paragraph text as well as the focus of specific paragraphs within the text."

The skills defined in this standard can be taught in many different ways—schools may determine which texts to use, what lesson strategy to utilize to teach the concept of "main topic," and how to engage students in the text in a variety of different ways to meet the standard. The decision on **how** to teach the standard remains a local decision.

How are the standards taught throughout the year?

Although Common Core identifies **what** students are expected to learn in each grade, **how** standards are taught (including lesson plans, daily objectives), the use of resources like textbooks, etc., is still a local decision, decided by teachers, school leaders, administrators, and district school board members. The standards do not mandate the use of a specific curriculum; schools and districts continue to have the flexibility to set the curriculum. As the standards are implemented, teachers continue to have the ability to create their own lesson plans to best meet the needs of their students, just as they have always done.



How do we know if students have achieved the standards?

The transition to Common Core includes adoption of the Smarter Balanced assessment starting in the 2014-15 school year. This assessment will replace the existing DCAS in mathematics and English language arts. The Smarter Balanced assessment will align more closely to the information students are expected to learn under the new standards. The assessment system will include:

- A computer adaptive **end-of-the-year assessment** administered during the last 12 weeks of the school year. This assessment measures whether a student has mastered the concepts outlined in the standards for that grade level.
- Optional **interim assessments** can be used throughout the year by educators to see how students are progressing. Teachers can match assessments with the scope and sequence of their lessons and review student responses to inform future or subsequent instruction. If, and how often, these interim assessments are given is a local decision.
- **Formative** tools and resources that help teachers meet the unique needs of each student. Educators have access to a digital library of tools and professional development materials for classroom instruction, for example, sample scoring rubrics for performance tasks.

In the first few years of a new assessment like Smarter Balanced, it is expected that student achievement scores will drop from previous years not because students know less, but because we are expecting more. Test scores may temporarily drop when the new exams are first given, but this information will give us a clearer picture of where students are struggling and how we can better support their preparation for college and life in a competitive global economy.

Conclusion

In order for students to achieve what they are capable of, we need to hold them to rigorous, developmentally appropriate, and internationally competitive standards. Common Core State Standards are an important step in preparing Delaware students to compete with their national and international peers. Implementation of the standards, in addition to continuing to develop the curriculum, and transitioning to the new assessments will ensure full implementation of the Common Core State Standards in Delaware schools.

Resources to Support Common Core State Standards in Delaware

Over the last four years, a number of initiatives and resources have been created to help support educators, parents, and the community understand the Common Core State Standards. The following initiatives have been created to help support implementation from 2010 to present.

Group/Resources	Website	Resource Level	Targeted Audience	Summary
DDOE Common Core resources	www.bit.ly/demathccss	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Administrators • Parents • Community members 	Primary resource page for Common Core in Delaware. Resources are available by content area with “toolkits,” including resources on transitioning to Common Core, lesson plans, videos, and more, specific for various constituencies.
Dream Team (LearnZillion)	www.bit.ly/dedreamteam	State	Teachers	Thirty-four teachers from across the state helping to develop high-quality Common Core assessment items that will be shared with teachers throughout Delaware.
DelExcels resources	www.deexcels.org	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents • Community members • Teachers 	A resource for parents and community members with information on transitioning to Common Core, assessments, and information for parents and teachers.
Common Ground for the Common Core	www.bit.ly/decommonground	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Administrators 	DDOE initiative involving 700 educators, designed to support educators’ implementing the standards by providing intense support to a team of teachers that can take knowledge to their schools.
DE State Board of Education	www.bit.ly/destateboard	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Administrators • Parents • Community members • Local school boards 	Hosted a Common Core workshop in February 2014 to give an updated on implementation and a presentation on shifts in assessment.
Delaware Reading and Math Cadre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.bit.ly/decadre • www.bit.ly/demathccss 	State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Administrators 	Professional Development modules on Common Core created by the DOE for replication in Local Education Agencies.

Schools That Lead*	www.bit.ly/schoolsthatlead	Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher • Administrators 	Has established four demonstration schools which will establish a standard of quality for Common Core aligned instruction that is relevant, sustainable, and replicable. Educators throughout the state will have the opportunity to visit these schools and study how they use research-based supports to ensure students meet the challenges of Common Core.
District resources	www.k12.de.us	District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers • Administrators • Parents • Community members 	Varies by district. Some districts have more developed resources than others.

**Formerly known as Vision Network*